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UNCLAS HARARE 000888

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR AF/S, DRL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR JFRAZER

E. O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ZCTU REMAINS NONCOMMITTAL ON FUTURE MASS ACTION

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1. (SBU) Summary. Discussions with the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions' (ZCTU's) chief economist indicate that while the organization is willing to publicly flex its muscles, it continues to be noncommittal about supporting politically-driven calls for mass action. End summary.

2. (SBU) The ZCTU continues to see its path as separate from and complementary to, rather than congruous with, that of the opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Although the ZCTU made strong statements at its May Day celebrations that it would address political issues when they affect its membership, the ZCTU's primary thrust continues to address economic and workplace issues. Nevertheless, labor contacts hint that there would be tacit support -- if not outright mobilization -- in response to an expected MDC call for mass action in the next few weeks.

3. (SBU) Comment: Labor sources continue to express an awareness of their own role as distinct from the role of opposition leaders. Although they are proud to be the source of the opposition party, they do not feel obligated to march in lock-step. We strongly suspect -- due to the large crossover in membership -- that many individual ZCTU members will heed an MDC call for mass action. However, the ZCTU as an organization remains bound by the concepts of consultation and consensus, which (notwithstanding the most recent mass action) often prevent swift mobilization. End comment.

Sullivan